

concordia creative writing



At the Layton Awards ceremony: Front row, L to R: Charlotte Hussey (poetry judge), Irving Layton, Mary di Michele (prose judge), Julia Gaunce (prose fiction winner), Carmine Starnino (poetry winner); back row, L to R: Gary Geddes (chair of poetry jury), Michael Harris (prose judge), Henry Beissel (Layton Awards curator), Richard Sommer (poetry judge), Erika Connor (prose fiction winner), Terry Byrnes (chair of prose fiction jury).

This March, Concordia recognized the best undergraduate writing with the presentation of the Irving Layton Awards for Creative Writing.

The Irving Layton Award, which was established in 1989, is presented annually in the form of two \$500 awards, for poetry and fiction. Any under-

graduate student registered at Concordia may compete for either award, or for both.

The winner in the poetry category was Carmine Starnino. Starnino, who said that he entered the competition "on a whim," has been writing poetry for three years. Winning came as a surprise, "a double shock--first getting short-listed and then winning."

The prose jury divided the \$500 award between

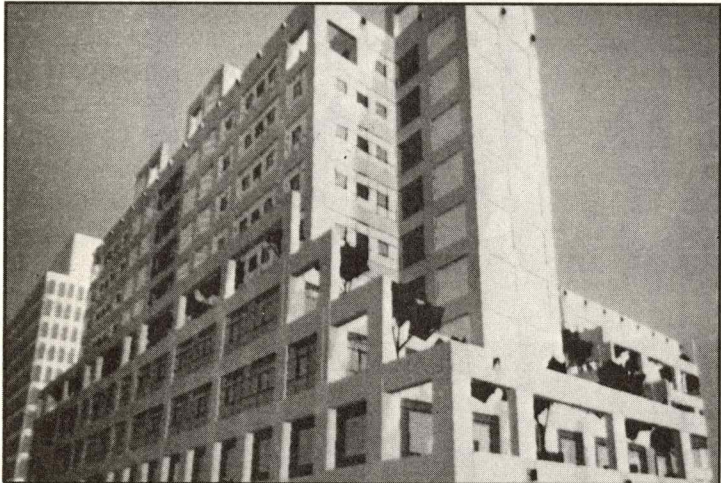
Erika Connor, for her story "African Daughter," and Julia Gaunce, for "La Rivière des Parfums." Connor, a Fine Arts major, submitted her story "to feel that I was serious about writing, and to start doing something about it." Gaunce, an English Literature major, had submitted her stories to magazines in the past but "they were all rejected." Receiving the award was the encouragement she needed. "That," she said, "was the big deal for me."

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Loyola Move Threatens Program

Creative Writing Coordinator Gary Geddes Responds to a Recent Proposal by a University Committee to Consolidate the Department of English and Creative Writing on Concordia's West-end Campus.

CONCORDIA'S ADMINISTRATION seems determined to move the Arts and Social Sciences faculty to Loyola campus as a means of "rationalizing" existing and recently acquired real estate. This move could involve 19 departments, schools, institutes and academic units, including English and Creative Writing. Although they have repeatedly denied that their proposals are set in stone, it seems quite clear that many share one senior administra-



Architect's
computer render-
ing of new
downtown library.
Space promised to
English/Creative
Writing is now in
question.

tor's view that "the move to Loyola is an idea whose time has come." For years, Concordia (particularly SGW) has prided itself on its service to the community. It began as a night school, which served the needs of working people; after it received its charter, Sir George Williams University continued to offer many evening classes downtown.

City Life

Now, English and Creative Writing courses are more popular downtown than at Loyola. We offer only two Creative Writing courses at Loyola because it is extremely difficult to guarantee sufficient enrollment there; the nineteen classes offered downtown, however, are always full to overflowing. A major shift of classes to Loyola will severely cripple the Creative Writing Programme. Much of the excitement and success of the Programme is directly related to its involvement in the life of downtown Montreal—the street life, commerce, politics,

publishing, theatre, galleries, cinema. The loss of this involvement will jeopardize our status as Montreal's (and eastern Canada's) finest venue for the study of Creative Writing. The results for the English Department as a whole are equally serious. English is the third largest department in the University, with one hundred full- and part-time faculty. It functions extremely well in its present state, serving the needs of both campuses. We enjoy a reputation as the best-run graduate programme in English in Quebec, in terms of student satisfaction, awards, and national and international recognition. An arbitrary decision to

"unite" the Department on one campus will have just the opposite effect; it will create enormous bitterness and inconvenience, not to mention job insecurity resulting from decreased enrollment. Most student housing is available in the vicinity of the downtown campus, from Atwater east to Bleury and wrapped north around Mount Royal to the Park Extension area. Students who rent in these areas want to pursue their studies downtown, where they have easy access to classes, to libraries, to part-time employment and to the offices of their instructors. In my role as English advisor and as Coordinator of Creative Writing, I meet numerous students who simply will not make the long trek to Loyola and who often change courses (at times even programmes) to avoid the disruptive and time-consuming journey west. The remoteness of the Loyola campus will result in significant student losses; students who want and need a downtown

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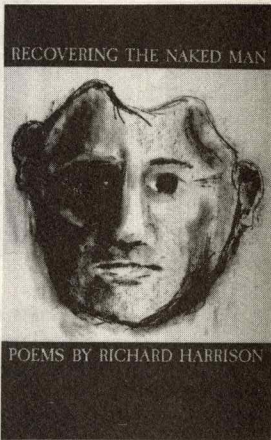
CCW NEWS

Terry Byrnes Nominated Canadian Professor of Year

The Alumni Office of Concordia University has nominated English/Creative Writing professor Terry Byrnes for the Canadian Professor of the Year Competition, which recognizes "excellent undergraduate teaching." Byrnes has been teaching Creative Writing workshops and prose techniques courses at Concordia since 1976. The competition is an annual event sponsored by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a U.S.-based organization with membership that includes the major North American universities and colleges. The winner of the competition will receive a special citation and a cash prize of \$5000 (U.S.) from Merck Frosst Canada Inc. The annual assembly of CASE will be held in Montreal this year, from July 14-17.

recent publications

Daniel McBain,
Art Roebuck Comes to Born With a Tooth,
Oberon Press
S.L. Sparring,
The Nest Egg,
Macmillan Canada
Richard Harrison,
Recovering the Naked Man,
Wolsak and Wynn



Sara MacDonald, "All I Ever Wanted Was the Moon," "Jenny's IUD Is Picking Up Signals from Outer Space," "The Rosetta Stone" and "Some Days I Wake Up Missing Everybody" in *Coming Attractions '90*, Oberon
Our library of publications by Creative Writing graduates continues to grow. Tell us what you're publishing or, even better, send us a copy!
Never-Ending Workshops
We've heard from a few CCW graduates who are interested in forming/attending informal writing workshops. If you have either plans or desires for such an event, advertise for free in CCW.

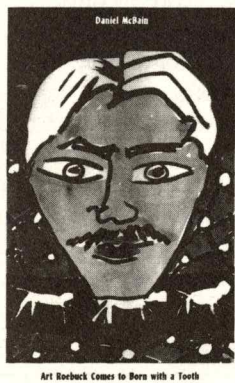
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Donations to Layton Awards

The Irving Layton Award for Creative Writing is now close to being a self-sustaining fund. If you want to help us get over the top, send donations to: University Advancement, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montreal, Que. H3G 1M8. Make sure that your envelope or cheque is clearly marked "Irving Layton Award."

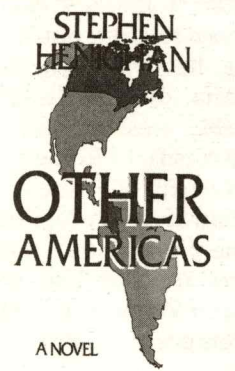
missing persons

Despite our best efforts to make sure that all Creative Writing graduates received the first issue of *Concordia Creative Writing*, some envelopes were returned, marked "Unknown" or "Moved." What follows is a list of names we'd like to connect with current addresses:



David Gosselin
Jennifer Boire
William Byron
Sandra Robertson
Bryan Sentes
Mark Cochrane
I.C. Ferrier
Jennifer Price
Mylene Pepin
Gary Caplan

If you know their addresses (or the address of someone who should be receiving CCW News, but isn't), please let us know.



next
in
CCW

This fall, look for an expanded

edition of CCW with extended articles on the writing, publishing and teaching life, including:
• Thumbnail Profiles of Concordia Graduates: Literary Publicist, Editor, Novelist, Poet.
• Gail Scott, Author of *Heroine*, 1991-92 writer in residence.
• Letter from Greece: Is there writing after graduation?
• Pressing Matters: Moosehead, Cormorant, Nu-Age, Pawn to Infinity, &, *The Quilted Tongue: A Guide to Concordia Publishing and Publishers*
• Michel Choquette's saga on teaching funny and writing funny, and more!

continued

MARY DI MICHELE, POET AND novelist, became a full-time member of the Creative Writing faculty this year. Di Michele has written seven books of poetry (*Luminous Emergencies*, the most recent, was nominated for Ontario's Trillium Prize this year) and is currently working on a novel called *Voice Prints*, which she characterizes as "a feminist thriller." However, her work resists simple classification. "My latest book, *Luminous Emergencies*, has a lot of 'between-genre' pieces," she says. "Geoff Hancock, the editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, called my Chilean sequence, 'To Inherit the Earth,' a 'parafiction'—a mixture of document, and story and prose poem. "To Inherit the Earth' is neither prose fiction nor poetry. It's based on docudrama, in some



Di Michele's interest in literary territories and borders finds a parallel in her personal background. Born in Italy and raised in Toronto, she completed an English/Creative Writing degree at the University of Windsor in 1974 and held the usual writer's farrago of jobs, from sous-chef to writer-in-residence. "I think of myself as a 'migrant writer,'" she says, "because I was born in another country, and the culture that shaped my early childhood isn't one of Canada's two 'founding cultures' -- something we're reminded of so frequently." Canada's linguistic duality can make the notion of full participation in Canadian society problematic for writers who are neither English nor French, and di Michele resents being defined as an "allophe" in Quebec.

Mary di Michele's Lang-Scape

ways, but it doesn't fit into the traditional genres. We tend to call everything that's experimental 'poetry,' but I think that's where the genres of prose and poetry actually meet." Di Michele's Chilean parafictions grew from a 1987 visit to Chile, where she met with writers and peace activists, and saw at first hand the effects of living under that country's repressive military regime. Di Michele says the Chilean trip had a "profound impact" on her. "The work that I wrote out of that experience was very different from what I'd been doing before. Going to Chile brought me back to poetry, out of the novel I'd been working on. Some of the pieces are very much between genres. A lot of my students are also working between genres. This, of course, is a concern of mine, as are gender-political issues..."

"Place becomes language, especially for the writer who's caught between cultures. My way of creating that sense of place in the language is by finding areas in which the two major cultures that have formed me come together. That's where the migrant lives and creates, in a kind of 'lang-scape.'" *Voice Prints*, di Michele's novel-in-progress, extends that lang-scape into the territories of the thriller and *policier*. The novel developed from her first published short story, "Many Small Deaths," which was inspired by a newspaper story about a medical doctor who was a systematic, record-keeping serial rapist. "It's a thriller about sexual relations," di Michele explains. "It was the doctor's intellectual and scientific control of madness that grabbed my interest. It's

From *Luminous Emergencies*, "Music, Literally or 'Make Your Life An Ear'":
Listening to Puccini is like having great sex with someone you love. No, that can't be right. Listening to Puccini is both physical and more so. The memory of great sex with someone you loved. When the sounds you hear are metaxsexual, it's Giacomo. Though he has died, that ladies' man is not dead.
Listening to Puccini is like being programmed with a laugh track. You respond even when you don't know how to respond.
Listening to Puccini is like being masterminded by the machinations of a deranged Pavlovian psychologist. He keeps ringing the bell. He forgets to feed the dog.
That is what is meant by hunger of the imagination.

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Awards continued

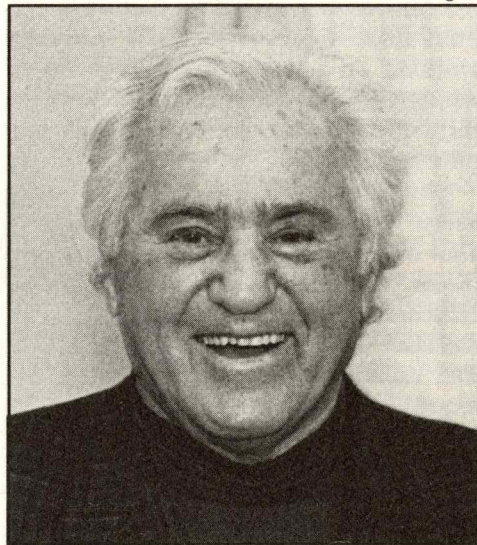
At the presentation ceremonies on the Loyola campus, Gary Geddes and Terry Byrnes, from the poetry and prose juries, spoke about the sophistication and skill of the work they had judged. The juries were also impressed with the *number* of manuscripts they received—more than 50 in each category. In the case of prose, this amounted to well over one thousand pages of fiction, which varied from poetic short-short stories of a few pages to full chapters from ambitious novels. Henry Beissel, the founder and curator of the Irving Layton Awards, said he "felt delighted, because that kind of participation shows that the award has taken root."

More Award-Winners

This spring, Nino Ricci underlined the extraordinary popular and critical success of his first novel, *Lives of the Saints*, by winning the W.H. Smith/*Books in Canada* First Novel Award, as well as the Governor-General's Award. *Books in Canada* said that *Lives* was "the clear choice of our panel of judges" and praised the novel as "a totally engrossing fictional world."

Beth Harvor, whose last book of short stories was *If Only We Could Drive Like This Forever* (Penguin), has just been

awarded the first prize in a national poetry contest sponsored by The League of Canadian Poets for her poem, "Fortress of Chairs." Harvor, who characterizes "Fortress of Chairs" as "a love and regret



Irving Layton

poem," reports that her first book of poetry will soon be published by Véhicule Press.

Daniel McBain first encountered the Spanish-language classic *Cocori*, by Costa Rican author Joaquín Gutiérrez, while travelling in Costa Rica, where he was studying squatter settlements for the

World University Service of Canada. His English translation of the book was awarded the John Glassco Translation Prize by the Literary Translators' Association of Canada, which complimented the "remarkably sensitive rendering of the rhythms and sonorities of the original work, and his witty equivalents for the various plays on words and other devices used by Gutiérrez." McBain's first novel, *Art Roebuck Comes to Born With a Tooth*, has just been published by Oberon.

Ng, Robinson

Lucy Ng and Mansel Robinson are current graduate students whose short fiction has already begun to attract national attention. Ng's lyrical, intense short story, "Fireflies," won Second Prize in the CBC Literary Competition this January. "Fireflies" tells the story of a Chinese-Canadian woman who travels with her father to the village he had fled during the Chinese civil war, in 1947. Ng's award included a cash prize of \$2500. Robinson's story, "Strays," received an Honourable Mention in *Books in Canada's* first Student Writing Awards.

di Michele continued

actually quite horrific. My editor found it a little too horrific. I guess I have some devils of my own to work out."

After completing her first year of teaching at Concordia, di Michele left for Italy, where she was writer-in-residence at the University of Rome for two weeks. The University of Rome has an extensive Canadian studies program and, while there, she presented a seminar called "A History You Can Use" on the poetry of Bronwen Wallace, as well as a survey of contemporary Canadian women poets.

A selection of Mary di Michele's poetry will be translated into Italian by Ricardo Durante and published by Imperia, a small Roman press interested in contemporary Canadian writers.

Loyola continued

education will simply choose to go to McGill.

New Library

The downtown portion of the English Department was given to understand, during the fund-raising period, that it, along with one of two other Departments in the Humanities, would be housed in the new library.

To move Humanities faculty to Loyola, while maintaining a full contingent of classes downtown, would be to force faculty to become neurotic commuters, attending classes and using libraries down-

town while trying to juggle books, student interviews, and administrative duties out at Loyola. I believe this arrangement will, in the end, lose us not only large numbers of students, but also many good members of faculty.

Concordia as we know it is an integral part of downtown Montreal, an institution of great strength and versatility, one that goes out of its way to serve the community and, perhaps because of its traditional status as poor cousin to McGill, Concordia strives a little harder for excellence.

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Editor Terry Byrnes • Design Marc Elias • Photos pp1,4: Jonas Papaurelis/*Thursday Report*

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If there's a Concordia Creative Writing story you'd like to see (or to write), let us know about it. Write to: **CCW News** • Department of English, SGW Campus • 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West • Montréal, Québec • H3G 1M8